



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Friday, October 22, 2004

Official West Nile Virus Monitoring Season Draws to a Close

West Nile Virus Detected in 11 Humans and Found in 11 of 29 Counties in 2004

(Salt Lake City, UT) – With temperatures dropping throughout Utah, mosquito activity is declining in the colder regions of the state, thereby decreasing the risk of West Nile virus (WNV) and signaling the close of public health's official monitoring season. Mosquitoes should stop biting when temperatures reach 27 degrees for two to three days. But for now, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) believes Utahns participating in fall outdoor activities like hunting or fishing in warmer climates should still wear DEET and cover up to avoid mosquito bites.

As of October 15, 2004, Utah detected: *(Italicized areas are new 2004 detections.)*

- WNV in 11 of Utah's 29 counties in 2004.
- 11 cases of WNV in humans, five of which were neuroinvasive (meningitis/encephalitis). Human cases of WNV were identified in six counties, four of which were new detections. The six counties included Box Elder, Davis, *Utah*, *Duchesne* (2), *Salt Lake* (2), and *Washington* (4).
- Of the 3,489 mosquito pools that were submitted, 144 tested WNV positive from *Duchesne* (22), *Grand* (91), *Salt Lake* (5), *San Juan* (1), *Uintah* (3), and *Washington* (22) counties.
- 5 Utah horses with WNV from *Grand*, *Salt Lake* (2), *Uintah*, and *Washington* counties. Two out-of-state horses tested positive (Arizona, Nevada) and 68 domestic horses have been tested.
- 28 individual sentinel chickens (out of 360) tested WNV positive from *Duchesne* (16), *Emery* (2), *Grand* (1), and *Washington* (9) counties.
- 3 birds (out of 200 submitted) were WNV positive from *Grand* (magpie), *Kane* (raven), and *San Juan* (Scrub jay) counties.

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Page 2 of 2 - Official West Nile Virus Monitoring Season Draws to a Close

The steady, westward spread of West Nile Virus and the explosion of cases in Colorado in 2003 indicated that the intermountain states were next but Utah fared much better than Arizona and even Nevada and California. It is not possible to calculate how many cases were prevented, but Utah public health agencies led an aggressive prevention and education campaign. The media campaign, “Fight the Bite: From Dusk to Dawn, Put Your DEET On,” ran through September. The UDOH allocated \$50,000 in prevention funds to reach the public with important messages. A partnership with the Utah Advertising Federation (UAF) yielded about \$180,000 in message value. The UDOH would like to thank the UAF, TV, radio, and print media partners and all others who contributed toward helping to save the lives of Utahns. The UDOH is conducting a follow-up survey to determine the impact that the campaign had on the public’s behavior.

“We got a great jumpstart on West Nile virus this year due to the partnership between public health, Agriculture, Natural Resources and mosquito control,” said Scott D. Williams, M.D., Executive Director, UDOH. “The generous donation of media time negotiated through the UAF, the coverage by the news media, the response of the public, and the funding from the Utah Legislature for mosquito control in a difficult budget year completed the package helping Utah get through the season much better than surrounding states. We hope to sustain these efforts for the next couple of years.”

In addition to the media campaign, hundreds of state, local and grassroots efforts took place to educate the public through the creation of helpful materials; the delivery of presentations and workshops as well as through valuable news coverage. The UDOH spent \$10,000 on DEET products to reach migrant workers, homeless people, Native American reservations and other high-risk groups.

The UDOH would like to thank all agencies that helped Utah have a milder than expected WNV season including Utah’s 12 local health departments, laboratories/ the Utah Public Health Laboratory, blood banks, the Utah Mosquito Abatement Association, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.